

# SPEECH

OF

## MR. W. W. WICK, OF INDIANA,

ON THE

### PRIVILEGE OF MEMBERS

AND

### THE SUBJECT OF SLAVERY.

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DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, APRIL 25, 1848.

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The resolution of Mr. PALFREY respecting the individual privileges of members of the House being under consideration—

Mr. WICK said : Whenever a discussion arises here upon any topic connected, even remotely, with the subject of slavery, it mainly falls into the hands of men entertaining extreme opinions, and under the influence of strong feeling ; and the result is, that moderate men, who think that they and their constituents see the subject in all its bearings, would, were they not admonished by opinion, almost universal, be in danger of falling into skepticism as to the truth of the admitted fact, that this House is the collected wisdom of the nation.

I propose, sir, not only to express my views in opposition to the adoption of the resolution before the House, with or without the proposed amendments ; but it is also my purpose to follow the example of those who have preceded me, with the exception of the honorable member from South Carolina, and some others, and take up and consider the subject of slavery, the rights of the slaveholder, the agitation of propositions to preclude, by legislation here, the possibility of the addition to the Union of any further territory without an exclusion of slavery therein, and generally the griefs, existing or alleged, growing out of the subject and its agitation. To do so, will be but the fulfilment of a desire and purpose long entertained.

I disagree, *to o cælo*, with those who fear that evil is to result from frequent and full discussions of this subject. On the contrary, I know that it must be discussed ; and for that discussion, now or any time is the proper time. In the extreme South, you have no discussion, for you have but one opinion. In the extreme North there is a partial consideration of the subject, but not such as to elicit, to any great or sufficient extent, a frank disclosure of opinions by any, except avowed abolitionists, who have nothing to lose. Their mode of treating the subject is sufficiently blunt. But, if I mistake not, other political parties, in some instances—the Whig party almost generally—instead of taking their ground firmly upon the constitu-

tional truth, charity, and practical good sense, whose teachings, calmly and faithfully presented, are always acceptable to the mass of the American people, and are amply sufficient to secure the perpetuity of the Union, have forgotten the relations which exist between them and their Southern brethren, and, to some extent, have compromised with the enemy of the public peace and of the Union—the abolition politician, and agitator—who, having nothing to lose, can afford to be reckless and audacious. He is at the bottom of the revolving wheel. A revolution might make a Marat or a Danton of him. Hence, he agitates fearlessly and boldly. His audacity is his political virtue. It even gives him the semblance of courage. Defying all laws, he contrives to be apparently a victim, and assumes the guise of a martyr upon the smallest imaginable occasions. If, instead of persecution, he finds himself the object of quiet disregard, he thinks himself a most unfortunate gentleman, and will add to the venom of the slime which he leaves in his tortuous path, in hopes to provoke some one to give him a kick, so that he may feel and proclaim himself a martyr. It is mortifying to reflect that abolitionism should become sufficiently formidable in any quarter to make it the *present* interest of politicians, and especially of political parties, to even a mere local extent, to descend from the platform of the Constitution, and adopt, as a part of their creeds, dogmas so far colliding with the interests and rights of entire sections of the Union, as to justly excite in the bosoms of the inhabitants of those sections a sense of injury and insult. But so it is. And this is the cause why this subject of slavery is so troublesome. The abolitionist is among us, and there let him stay. He has a right to be among us. Shall we say that it is dangerous to discuss the dogmas of his paternity because they have been adopted by others? Sir, I fear nothing from discussion, that is, nothing of evil to the Republic. I may suffer individually. A few may be pricked by my sayings and become deadly enemies. They may cause me to fall politically. But it will not be by presenting my opinions and votes, on this and analogous questions, to those constituents by whose votes I am here; for, of those, there are not more than forty who will disapprove of my course on this subject. But, a few busy men, inspired by a single idea, and acting upon the principle that the end justifies the means, may effect a great deal, by urging against me other considerations, true or false, accordant with the popular feeling. My course on this subject will never be condemned in my district by Democrats, to any extent, except in whispers among those who, for the sake of their own consistency and candor, ought to acknowledge themselves the disciples of JOHN P. HALE. A vast majority of my Whig constituents will secretly approve of my course; but, for fear of their abolition allies, and because I am a Democrat, I shall never have the benefit of their open approval. They *must* find fault with all I do or say.

But, sir, as a member here, and in the discharge of my duty, I would not think of myself, but of my constituents and country. I am satisfied that the public good, as involved in the perpetuity and general ascendancy of the Democratic party, will be promoted by the free discussion of this subject. As one of my constituents said at an Abolition Convention, and in reference to the speeches he there heard, “let every fellow talk to his notion.” Sir, I deny that, in a Republic, any theme, proposition, or *projet*, is to be *tabooed*. The good sense of the people will set all right, if you will discuss fearlessly, here and elsewhere, in speech and in print, and by all other possible means. The people hold truth and its advocacy in respect. “Truth is mighty, and will prevail.”



But I am digressing. My first object is to state a single reason why I shall vote against the resolution before the House.

I do not understand that, under our Constitution or laws, any act is a breach of privilege, if its offensiveness be confined to members of the House in their individual character, and if its motive be found in the unofficial conduct of the member or members. If a member be assailed or menaced *for words spoken in debate, or for the discharge of his duty*, I grant it is a breach of privilege. But nothing of the kind is alleged in this case. If the member from Ohio (Mr. GIDDINGS) will bring himself within my views of the Constitution and law, I will not pause to inquire whether this application for the extension of the most extraordinary and dangerous power of this House is or is not brought forward from a regard for the honor and prerogatives of the House. I will not suffer myself to guess that the honorable member's *forced* popularity at home, hot-housed into a long continuance by a former expulsion from this Hall, as just as it was impolitic, is failing for want of thorns to crackle under his pot; and that, in order to remain here, or elsewhere in political life, longer, he must have a new inventory of martyrdoms to lay before his most respectable, though somewhat peculiar constituency; and that he made a pilgrimage to the Washington city jail to see those who were there in durance, (but who were no constituents of his and who had immediate Representatives in this and the other Hall, to whom they could apply,) in hopes to be mobbed or threatened, so as to make a case to bring before the House and country, and so to bring to the notice of the good people of the Western Reserve his most martyr-like virtues, and the great wickedness of Washington city mobs, and thus incline the hearts of the excellent citizens of said Reserve to give him another lease of his desk here for a two years' term, renewable forever. I would not deprive the honorable member of the advantage resulting from such amiable diplomacy. I wish him to retain his place here. I have got used to him. The House and the country are used to him. I fear there would be a stagnation here if we were deprived of his presence. Besides, sir, I am persuaded that his constituency will always—for a long time to come, at least—return to this House some sort of political monstrosity; either an abolition-mounted Whig or a Whig-mounted abolitionist. Now, sir, the honorable member has, in a sort, been a fixture here for a long time, and I myself have cultivated for him a peculiar regard—a sort of affection; and as I was raised, as they say in Virginia, in this same Western Reserve. I have the most friendly reminiscences concerning many of his constituency, when they and I were gossoons together; and I give it as my deliberate opinion that there is no man in the world can so well represent them, while they are such as they now are, as the honorable member himself. Therefore, if I supposed it needful to the honorable member, I would do anything in reason to secure him political perpetuity. But it is not now needful. If we refuse the desired inquiry, that will be persecution. And if we grant it, he will get a first rate electioneering document, at public expense, in the evidence reported by the committee. For that matter, he has it now in his statement presented by the honorable member from Massachusetts; for the majority of his constituents will think his pilgrimage to the city jail was a mission of mercy, and will think of him for President—though I know his well-understood modesty will decline that honor—and then they will wonder at his moderation!

I vote against the resolutions, and the inquiry which they propose, (as I hope I have demonstrated,) from no lack of kindly feeling towards the

honorable member from Ohio, but solely because the menaces which he states to have been uttered against him were not aimed at, or caused by, any specific words spoken in discussion here, nor at nor by any act of official duty. It is those matters alone that are protected by our American doctrine of privilege. I know the English precedents go further. But I do not recognize their authority. They are not adapted to our institutions, or to the state of things in this country. If a member of Congress gets into a personal scrape when cruising on his own hook about the purlieus of Washington, and beyond the precincts of the Capitol, he must rely on the judiciary of the District. I believe justice is as well administered here as it is in Ohio or in Indiana, and the laws afford the most ample remedies.

I wish to premise my further remarks by a brief narrative of the events which have produced a temporary excitement in this Hall, and which will (as was intended) extend into certain vicinities of the country.

A few days ago, a vessel from one of the Northern ports landed at a public wharf in Georgetown, within this District, (Georgetown, in fact, adjoins this city,) and discharged a load of firewood. In a night or two after discharging freight, the vessel made sail down the river. The next morning near eighty slaves were missing in this city and Georgetown, having been taken on board said vessel. Under the direction of the constituted judicial authorities, or of the persons interested, or both, a steamboat made pursuit in a few hours, and, in a peaceable and orderly manner, overtook the piratical craft, and brought it, the captain and crew, and also the runaway slaves, back to this city, and lodged them in jail. On the way from the steamboat landing to the jail, there was no material disturbance, though I heard a few exclamations against the alleged thieves. I should say no more than, if as much as, I have heard on several occasions of the arrest of horse thieves, taken with the stolen horses in their possession, and brought into my own good and orderly town of Indianapolis. A member of this House (Mr. GIDDINGS) went to the jail to visit the alleged criminals. They were not constituents of his, but strangers to him. He took with him his friend, Mr. Hamlin, and recommended him to the criminals as a lawyer, to be employed for their defence. They (the prisoners) had not sent for the honorable member, or for Mr. Hamlin. They are said to be principal owners of the vessel aforementioned, and needed no charity. A variety of inferences have been started as to the motive of the honorable member in visiting the jail and prisoners. The honorable member understands himself as having been influenced by considerations of humanity solely. In the community of this District, the act was understood as an effort publicly to give the sanction of the honorable member's name in condemnation of the slaveholding which their fathers practised, and taught them to practise, and as a sort of defiance of them. By some persons it was simply understood as a not very respectable act. These inferences, of others than the honorable member, may or may not be correct. I know the honorable member likes troubled waters; but I am slow to conclude against him the implication of low or dishonorable motive. Yet I must acknowledge, that had the honorable member failed to assure us that his motives were merely humane, and were he a stranger to me, I should, on the case stated, have inferred that he went to the jail on purpose to get into a scrape. And but for his assurances, I should have inferred that Mr. Hamlin was his special friend, and that he was anxious to place him in a position as counsel for these prisoners, to present his bills to the Northern Abolition societies, whose promptitude in paying such bills, on the certificate



of the honorable member from Ohio, will not be doubted. They are capital paymasters. One or two of my professional brethren at home tried them, and found they bled freely. If the honorable member's friend should, in consequence of being a stranger, and of his social connections, be of no service to his clients, but the business have to be done by the lawyers of this District, who understand the local laws and the practice of the courts, and who, from their knowledge of the population, can understandingly challenge jurors—why, so much the greater will be his obligations to the honorable member. The worst inference which, in the absence of the assurances of the honorable member, I could make, would be, that he had got his friend a fee, and done something to be talked of among the good people of the Western Reserve—thus killing two birds with one stone; and if he failed in getting himself mobbed, why, he saved his bacon.

A handsome young Englishman eloped to the continent with the ugly old wife of an earl. At Florence, he met a quondam college chum, who asked him thus: "Ned! what in the name of all that is wonderful, made you run off with such a frightful bag of shuttles—such a withered, haggard, dried-up specimen of the feminine gender as is this countess?" "Why," said Ned, "I tried every way to do something to be talked of, and get into the gazette—all in vain. I determined to be notorious. The countess was the only woman of rank who would run off me, and find me guineas to make me happy. Had I run off with a young, beautiful commoner, it would have been a small affair. But a countess, eh! Notoriety, my dear fellow; notoriety is everything." If the honorable member from Ohio worships the same goddess with this sprig of aristocracy, he will find her propitious, I fancy, under the circumstances, which seem to have grown up as if by magic to his hand. I am persuaded he will be a fixture in political life, here or elsewhere, not "while sun and moon endure"—not "while grass grows and water runs"—but so long as just his corner of Buncombe should have the bad taste to appreciate his services at less than their great value, it can so happen that he can become the subject of an expulsion, an investigation, or of a fuss in general.

Why, sir, the honorable member is not an exception to the rule. Many a clever fellow, elected as the first choice of his district, and called a right smart man at home, sinks into disregard, because he does nothing here for notoriety—nothing to be made the subject of an editorial, a letter, or a speech.

I have made a sliding scale of the means of acquiring notoriety as a member of this House, drawn from the most authentic sources, and find them as follows:

- 1st. To be gloriously persecuted.
- 2d. To get into a fight.
- 3d. To have many heated altercations, and always get the better in the way of hard sayings.
- 4th. To move a suspension of the rules often, for the purpose of introducing popular propositions.
- 5th. To make frequent personal explanations.

It is true that the first three will be almost unavailing, unless you can get the editors and letter writers to take the matter in hand; and it is also true that our masters have so far come to an understanding of the last two, that none but a green one will rely much upon them. But if a man can only bring all those means into his service, he is in a fair way to become a tall cedar, and as a member of this House, perennial.

I myself have never had any reason to complain of persecution. They lied on me some at home; but that was to be expected. Here I have complained of nothing. I had a bargain with one of my Democratic friends to get up an altercation, and consequent fight; but we abandoned the plan, for fear we should both burst into a laugh, and so expose our plot. I have had thoughts of "lighting on" some little fellow of a Whig, but then I am afraid of "foreign intervention."

The honorable member from Ohio seems to understand such things; and I appeal to his personal kindness to get me into some scrape, which will make a great noise and fuss, without hurting skin or bone, so that my good constituents may see that I am fighting gloriously in their behalf. If the honorable member refuse me this favor, I very much fear that I shall never enter this Hall after the expiration of the present Congress. To be sure I am here late, early, and always, answer all letters, attend to all commissions, vote on all questions, and make speeches when I can get the floor. But there is no excitement in these things; they are too common. O! if I could only get myself terribly mobbed, or whipped, or whip somebody, or get persecuted! Verily, my good nature and my industry will be my ruin! Would it not be hard for a man to loose a seat in Congress only because he attends to his business, and will be a gentleman?

But, sir, I am wandering somewhat from the point, I fear.

In addition to the facts which I have stated, but little remains to be told. It is said that there have been mobs collected in this city, on the two consecutive nights, following the events already narrated. I was present at one of them. It was a very orderly mob—much more so than this House often is. It passed divers resolutions. I was not pleased with one of them. I am not always pleased with the resolutions adopted by this House. They resolved that if the editor of a certain abolition newspaper, published in Washington, did not, before the next night, remove his press, from the District of Columbia, they would remove it for him. He did not remove it. At the time appointed the mob "met pursuant to adjournment." Did they tear down his press or remove it? Not a bit of it. The editor of the abolition paper (to his honor be it spoken) stood his ground. He informed the most gentlemanly mob that, so far as their resolution was concerned, he was a nullifier. He threw himself upon his reserved rights. Whereupon this most polite and law-abiding mob (to its everlasting honor and to the honor of Washington city, and of the District of Columbia, be it spoken) most magnanimously backed out, and nullified its own resolution; and there stands the abolition printing-press and office in all their glory! That it was established here on purpose to be mobbed, and demolished, so as to excite sympathy, and force abolition principles and feelings upon the people of the Northern States, many do, and will continue to believe. I do not. Be that as it may, if the people of this District will not demolish an abolition press, located among them, within a week after near a hundred of their slaves have been stolen, they never will. So mote it be.

I believe I have narrated all the material facts, except that some black-guard, or abolitionist, threw a few stones out of some dark corner and broke a window or two a little.

"Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth." Out of this affair a very animated discussion has arisen in this Hall, and the honorable member from Ohio is, in one way or the other, sure of his crown of martyrdom. The abolitionists of the North, and the cavaliers of the South (some of them) will, for once, agree in opinion. They will both swear



(to the best of their knowledge and belief) that there is a prodigious excitement all over the country. When a man is drunk, he takes every man he sees to be drunk.

I am well aware that my calm mode of considering this subject accords not at all with the political interests of abolitionists. Nor will it be acceptable to the tastes of the thoroughbred Southern cavalier. The interests of the one would be better subserved, and the tastes and feelings of the other more flattered, if I would go into some sort of a fit on the occasion of the discussion of this terrible topic! Excuse me, gentlemen, I am not spasmodically disposed. I am not inclined to take either a convulsion or an epileptic fit on the occasion. No! not even an hysteric spasm. The topic is *not* a terrible one to me, nor to those by whose votes I am here. Your united arguments and vociferations cannot induce me to believe, or to say without believing it, that the Union is in any immediate danger on account of slavery or abolitionism, or of the folly or wickedness of either.

I propose to give a synopsis of the opinions of myself, and of all (except about thirty) of those by whose votes I am here. Listen, and see how you like our way of thinking. I propose not only "to speak to the best of my knowledge and belief the truth, and nothing but the truth," (as is, I believe, usual here,) but also to "speak the whole truth;" in which respect I shall perhaps be rather unfashionable.

Our opinions are about as follows:

1st. 'The original cause of slavery—the stealing of men and women in Africa—was, in our opinion, an act, or a series of acts, of unnatural, oppressive, and unmitigated wrong. So, also, we think of knowingly purchasing, as slaves, the women and men thus stolen.

2d. We understand, in reference to the holding of slaves by descent, or purchase from those to whom they have descended, that it may or may not be wrong, according to circumstances and the intent of the actor. We generally would agree upon the declaration of one of the few churches, whose organization in the United States has not been broken up (to their shame be it spoken) by the unprofitable agitation of this subject—not generally among the church members, but principally among the clergy in their periodical assemblies, conventions, or conferences—which declaration, if my memory does not fail me, is in these words, to wit: "Slaveholding, as practised in these United States, is not, in itself, of necessity, sin."

3d. We believe that the introduction of slavery into the United States, though brought about by acts in violation of his law, is of the providence of God; and that, in defiance of the madness of fanatics, and not by their agency, He will bring out of it great good to his creature man, the special object of his providence and grace.

4th. We hold that Congress has no power to either authorize or prohibit slavery in any State or Territory of the United States. We admit the power of Congress to regulate slavery in the District of Columbia; and we think that Congress ought to exercise that power by prudent and moderate legislation aimed at any abuses which exist. A strict construction of the Constitution forces us to this conclusion. As Democrats, we are bound to adhere to a strict construction of that instrument. It is therein that we differ from Federalists, whom we accuse of frittering away the Constitution by a liberal construction of it.

I am aware that one of my votes, given in the last Congress upon an amendment to the Oregon bill, conflicts with an opinion expressed in this paragraph. That was before I had thought well upon the subject, with

the Constitution before me. If any one wishes to hit me a personal rap, in retort for some of my general remarks not exactly to his taste, I can furnish him with much more glaring instances of change of opinion and practice, on my part, than is this small matter. Any fool can be consistent, but it is only a man whose wisdom exceeds his personal pride, who will gladly abandon heresy and embrace truth, as he shall, by searching, find it out.

5th. We hold that some of our Northern friends very gratuitously shoulder, as national sins, matters of law, under the exclusive control of States and Territories. We deny, as antiquated, and as appertaining to a dark age, the notion that one man can be made morally responsible for any but his own acts, and those which he *directly* encourages others to commit. We are skeptical, generally, as to there being any such thing as national sin. And, in this connection, we deny that it is any part of the duty of the people of New England, or of the Western Reserve, to repent of the sins of Southern slaveholders. We deny the virtue of any such vicarious repentance; and, with all our charity, we sometimes fear that those who thus busy themselves about the transgressions of others, will, as a consequence, become sad pharisees, and each go blundering along with an unmitigated beam in his own eye. We intimate this most respectfully.

6th. We respectfully suggest to our slaveholding brethren to consider of the propriety of gradually emancipating their slaves, and hope they will effect that object at the time they may judge best; and we make it a special request that they will so conduct the operation as not to inundate us with their emancipates. We dread the presence of a numerous colored population among us, and have endeavored to provide against it by State legislation. But such laws will be evaded. The newspapers, from Maine to Texas, have said that our supreme court has decided our law on this subject to be unconstitutional; on the contrary, the court decided the law to be constitutional and binding. The court consisted of a man from "the old Bay State," a Jerseyman, and a Virginian. The court was unanimous, I believe. The newspapers are not right *always*.

7th. We esteem a professional slave-dealer as an unmitigated brute beast.

8th. We deny that an increase of the area of slavery will, of necessity, increase its volume, unless the importation of slaves be again authorized, which no one thinks of. We can see that it may better the condition of slaves. We can see that the huddling together in a small compass of the slaves of the country may accelerate emancipation. But we also see that such hasty emancipation would be likely to bring upon us in Indiana an avalanche of colored population. Admitting that evil is to be feared, as to the continuance of slavery as a consequence of extending its possible area, we deny the constitutional power of Congress to legislate in prevention of that evil. It is a matter of municipal legislation appertaining to the States and Territories. We do not see the end. But we are sure that God does.

9th. When we hear a man declaim about the hardship to Northern laborers resulting from slave labor coming in competition with their labor, we are sure he does not understand himself, if he proposes, as a remedy, the abolition of slavery or its restriction. If the slaves be emancipated, their labor will still and nevertheless continue to come in competition with the labor of the white man of the North. If the importation of slaves were practised or allowed, the argument would be good against such importation. The benevolent abolitionist or anti-slavery man ought not to insist on this argument. It is unsound. To remove the competition created by the



labor of the colored man, it will not be sufficient to emancipate him. The poor fellow must be exterminated, to release the white laborer from the competition complained of. It is very important sometimes to examine subjects. Do you remember the story of Dr. Franklin, the philosopher, the bucket of water, and the fish? Enough said!

10th. We doubt not but that there are many cruel masters in the South, who misuse and treat cruelly their slaves, to a greater or less extent; but we do not believe that God sent all the evil human nature into the Southern States, and all the choice qualities of the same article into New England, New York, the Western Reserve, &c. We *guess* He adjusted the matter about equally. A man of wealth and of a cruel disposition in the South, we suppose, will indulge himself in oppression and cruelty towards his slaves; and the same sort of a man in the North will amuse himself by lording it over his poor neighbors, oppressing the widow and the fatherless, and tyrannizing over his wife, children, and servants. One thing we know: emancipated negroes and runaways among us, after a little experience, universally prefer being employed as servants by those of our people who are from Kentucky and Virginia. They say that Yankees do not know how to treat colored people. In fact, I have frequently known them prefer pinching want, in their own little cabins, to profitable service in the most respectable families from the Eastern States.

Moreover, we doubt not but that the truly benevolent man can, and does, as the owner of slaves, find numerous opportunities of exerting his good qualities in his demeanor towards them. He can be, and frequently is, to his slave, friend, counsellor, and physician. We are of opinion that such masters are more frequently found in rural life than in towns. The town spoils the slave, and does not morally improve the master. We believe that a great deal of Southern benevolence finds scope in most praiseworthy efforts to improve the condition of the slave; and are satisfied that, in many instances, Southern chivalry expends much tenderness upon the female slave. We do not praise this.

New England is full of benevolence. Witness the numerous associations formed with a design to better the condition of man. Sometimes, when we become a little pharisaical ourselves, we inwardly smile at the ostentation of the thing; but we give a hospitable reception to all the missionaries the New England societies send among us to convert the heathen of Indiana; and, thus far, some of our young savages marry the female teachers they send us, about as soon as they come to hand. Send them on. They make good wives; and they look "so almighty slick," that they will soon be released from school-teaching, by being called to preside over the houses of young Hoosiers. If they preside over they Hoosier's person and mind, as well as over his affairs, why—no odds—it is not slavery. We hold the Northern and Southern people to be alike good and alike bad. They are good and bad in different ways. Were we to criticise you, we should say that there are a good many sinners in the South, and a good many Pharisees at the North; and we doubt not that if you were to get out of temper with us, on precisely the same day, you could get up a joint meeting of puritans and cavaliers, and unanimously vote us out of the synagogue as publicans. Do so, if you feel like it. In return we wish you both well, and pray God to cure you of your mutual disposition to repent of each other's sins, whereby you convert this Hall into an arena for unreasonable, uncharitable, and reproachful squabbling, in which

we take no interest, except to be pained thereby. We have no respect for your unfraternal objurgations. Excuse our plainness. It is our way.

11th. We have witnessed, for years, the unprofitable and most injurious effects resulting from efforts to legislate, contrary to the Constitution, on the subject of slavery; whereby much time has been wasted, and much ill feeling and local jealousy brought into existence, and have resolved to esteem most highly those who are most silent on that topic in this Hall. We are aware that Democrats, professing to be strict constructionists, sometimes bring the subject forward. For the benefit of such, I will tell a story. A clever young Hoosier was riding along one of our roads. He was mounted on a full-blooded Whip and Bertrand horse. He met a wealthy and respectable gentleman, reasonably good-looking, very ruddy, and rather oldish, who was mounted on the ugliest specimen of horse flesh imaginable. He (the horse, not the man) was snip-nosed, big-headed, ewe-necked, swag-backed, hog-rumped, sickle-hamed, timber-limbed, knock-kneed, and clump-footed. Moreover, his mane and tail were not flowing, but bristly; each fetlock was like a festoon of chesnut burs, and he had a vile trick of stumbling against any other horse he met on the road. In that way he victimized the horse of our young cavalier, repeatedly, while the two riders were taking a chat *en passant*. The following dialogue thereupon took place between the rider of the fine horse, whom we will call for the nonce Blood, and the rider of the ugly horse, whom we will temporarily christen by the name of Jade.

*Blood.* I say, my dear sir, you ride just a leetle the ugliest specimen of horseflesh I ever did see. It is a mortal shame to be riding such an animal round the country, blundering against people. See, your abominable beast has coked my horse till he will limp for a month, and he has barked my shin like blazes. You ought to shoot him.

*Jade.* I am bound to acknowledge that my horse is no beauty, and he is no great saddle-horse. But for ploughing corn, harrowing in oats, snaking logs, and riding round the farm, he is capital; and then he is so good and quiet for the boys to ride to mill, and the old woman to meeting. I admit he is a bad roadster, and blunders against people to a degree. But I say, let them keep out of the way.

*Blood.* Have you no better saddle-horse?

*Jade.* Yes, several; but it suits me to ride this beast. I think to *force some one to buy him*.

*Blood.* Sob! old fellow, is that your policy? Now, I do not blame your horse for being ugly. He is as he was made. I do not blame you for owning him, and using him *at home*, for your ploughing, harrowing, and snaking, and for your domestic riding round your farm; but if you are a clever fellow, you will keep that horse *at home*.

And so say I to the Northern Democrats of the Wilmot proviso and self-called anti-extension-of-the-area-of-slavery stamp. You cannot expect ever to convert Southern Democrats. You tried your hand at browbeating Western Democrats last Congress; you made personal attacks upon them; your few adherents in their districts clandestinely sought to subvert them; but they are here again; and several who voted with you last Congress now vote against you. The old men—the neighborhood politicians, who love the unity of the Democratic party, and look upon it as the rock of political safety—gave some of them a hint, I guess. And from the way the Northern Democratic votes go, I guess there have been some hints given and taken in that quarter. Your ugly beast of a horse may carry you through your districts well enough; but if you bring him here upon the national highway, the riding of him can give you small satisfaction, unless you can find a malicious pleasure in the idea that you may unhorse a



neighbor, or mayhap at least make him rub a shin. In the spirit of kindness I tell you to keep that horse *at home*. But, say you, our constituents expect us to ride that horse. We rode him through our districts. He carried us into the affections of our constituents, for when we went a-wooing to them, we were ever on his back. Well, then, go to them and tell them the truth. Tell them that this same horse is a bad cross of democracy and abolitionism; that he wins no race on the national democratic course; that, in ploughing up the national cornfields he runs on and ploughs up the corn and leaves the weeds standing: and that no one regards him with either respect or fear, except now and then a cavalier, who takes a fright at him, before he gets used to him. If that fails read my speech to them; and if that fails, advise them that they ought to vote with the abolitionists, and say so to them in the spirit of kindness as I now speak to you, "Honesty is the best policy." We know that your course is so disgusting to the Democrats of the Southern States, that if the Middle and Western States were to follow you, the Southern Democrats would withdraw from their connection with Northern Democrats, and thus the party organization would be broken up. This would bring all the elections of President into this House, to be carried by the highest bidder, or by corrupt coalitions of mere factions, without reference to principle. I wish to be in order, Mr. Speaker. I do not mean this House. This House is honest. But if parties, based upon principle, cease to control this Government, factions, having no common bond but love of place and plunder, will control it; and if honest parties are subverted or dissolved, and factions prevail, Presidential elections will constantly or frequently come into this House; and, in that event, you will not have an honest House here long. No sir! This temple of liberty will become "a den of thieves."

We cannot, therefore, go with you. We are the majority of the Democratic party—*i. e.*, we and the Southern Democracy—with whom we continue to jog along pretty comfortably by the exercise of no more mutual forbearance and charity than our Bible enjoins, and by refraining from mutual aggression or reproach. In this matter, we tell you before the country, the world, and God, that you are aggressors. No one is seeking to impose any slavery upon you; and no one asks you to vote for a law to establish slavery anywhere. We will not so vote. If you choose to make yourselves responsible for the possible—not probable—existence of slavery, (established by no vote of yours, and against your advice,) but possibly to exist as you may imagine, for the want of a previous restriction, which, if enacted, would be void for the want of constitutional authority, and which would be open to repeal by Congress, or by the act of the people interested—why, all we have to say is, that, *on this one subject*, you have marvelously susceptible consciences. God give you equal susceptibility on matters of personal morality, and emotion of heart and life.

I say, we are the majority; and if you cannot keep that horse of yours *at home*, for *home* service, we will not "read you out;" but we will say to you, in all kindness, that it were best you should join yourselves to the abolitionists. They are an ambitious party, and will receive you, asking no questions, provided you will profess the "one idea," and give them your votes.

In the name of those who sent me here, I have spoken the result of our political lucubrations in Hoosierland. If you do not like it, there is no harm done. We charge you nothing for it.

I have a few words to say, as of myself, and without any special instruction ; though I judge perfectly in accordance with the views of those who sent me here.

I wish to show, not only that there is no occasion for the angry discussion of matters appertaining to slavery, but moreover that there is not one section of this Union whose people have any right to assume the attitude of censors on the subject of slavery, and deal out reproofs, reproaches, and anathemas upon those who hold slaves, and do so conscientiously.

New England and Old England instituted slavery in the colonies before the Revolution. While New England could take rum and guns, and gunpowder to Africa and barter them for negroes ; take the negroes to the Southern colonies and barter them for cotton, sugar, indigo, and rice ; take the cotton, sugar, indigo, and rice to England and barter them for manufactures, and bring the manufactures home and sell them—making four profits on the capital invested, to wit : one profit on the rum, guns, and gunpowder ; another on the negroes ; another on the cotton, sugar, rice, and indigo ; and a fourth on the manufactures ; New England not only did not allege aught against slaveholding, but she justified and maintained man stealing. She moreover justified the selling of rum to poison the poor Africans, and maintained, by the sale of guns and gunpowder, the bloody and desolating wars in Africa which brought victims to your slave marts.

These things, sons of the Pilgrims, your fathers did. The thing worked in a circle. Their rum turned the African chief into a demon. To obtain more of the accursed fire, he would sell his own people, or make war on a neighboring tribe, to bring them to the slave ships of your fathers. The slaves brought high prices in the South, where the climate and soil made their labor more profitable than in New England. Therefore, and not because they thought slavery an evil, which they wished to keep far from them, they sold the negroes in the South. The South had no ships ; your fathers had them, and therefore they received in exchange for the negroes the products of the South, and carried them abroad to exchange for manufactures to be sold at home. Though born in Pennsylvania, I am a full-blooded Yankee ; and I stand here, sustained by all history, and say our fathers were man-stealers. Some of them did not personally participate, but they stood by and said never a word for poor Africa. An advocate of the doctrine of national sins among you ought to go into sackcloth and ashes, on account of this iniquity of our fathers.

When, by importations, and by sending off her own household slaves to be sold at the South, the market was fully supplied, so that the ordinary increase of population would forever keep the South full of slaves, and no more money could be made out of the slave trade, New England began to grow moral. In process of time, the slave trade was forbidden by the common consent of the South and the North.

Now, if New England would go to the Southern slaveholders and say, "Our fathers stole men, women, and children in Africa, brought them to this country, and sold them to your fathers ; in those dark days this was deemed to be right ; but now God requires all men everywhere to repent. We are constrained to admit that our fathers were piratical thieves, and that your fathers were no better, for they were receivers. We must do right, let what will come of it. The full price which your fathers paid to our fathers for the negroes has built up our cities and factories, and sent our sails to be filled by every breeze of heaven. You, too, have derived profits. Your



slaves have increased in number rather more than they have decreased in value. We must emancipate these slaves. We will tax ourselves, and pay you half price for your slaves, and let them go free ;"—I should speak well for her honesty and fairness. New England forgets all the past. She forgets even so much of the present as does not sustain her position. She forgets that the present generation of slaveholders are neither thieves nor receivers ; that slavery descended to them, and is fixed upon them by laws and circumstances prohibiting their sudden repeal or modification. She forgets that her sons are "sharp at a bargain," and are as much controlled by interest as any other people. She forgets that mighty interests are involved in this slavery question, and expects the South to be as sacrificingly moral as she herself is when interest and morality do not conflict. She cannot ask or force the South to emancipate. But she asks the South to submit to laws or policy which will keep the volume of slavery forever pent up within its present bounds, so as to force emancipation by circumstances, and as the result of the unhappy condition of both master and slave. How would New England take it, if the South were to demand that some great Northern interest should be thus strangled ?

New England also demands such legislation as shall admit of no other interpretation than as a national sentence against the practice of holding slaves. The South will not quarrel with any moralist who will, in ordinary speech, or writing, condemn them on this point. But to ask them to submit to a national sentence, solemnly voted, and recorded, in the form of an act of Congress, is asking what neither Southern nor any other human nature can endure. The fact is, New England is not very charitable—does not "hope the best things." New England is a very great part of the world. Her people are a great people. They err, however, in other respects as well as in repenting of their neighbor's sins. They affect to act as the vicegerents of Providence, in reference to the slavery question. God governs the world. I reverence New England—especially New Hampshire and Maine, which have not yet been permanently overrun with the spirit of self-righteousness and vicarious repentance ; but I scarce expect to be invited within her borders to make political speeches ; and be dined and feted. No odds ! The blood of her Barbers and Watsons is in my veins. God bless her.

New York does not consider herself a part of New England, though partially so considered in my country, because the blood of the Yankee has almost entirely displaced that of the Knickerbocker.

New York *was* a great State. It has, however, adopted—in part, at least—such opinions in reference to slavery as are impracticable and inconsistent with the unity of the Democratic party, and thus nullified herself as a Democratic State. Nebuchadnezzar *was* a great monarch. But he went mad, and was turned out to grass. The low diet proved salutary, and his reason returned. I believe I am prepared to turn New York out to grass. Formerly, when New York spoke, I made a sign to the Hoosiers to listen. But now it speaks so strangely, that I say to it, "Signor Benedict ! I wonder you will be talking so. No one minds you."

Mr. Speaker, during last Congress I repeatedly heard the epithet "*dough-face*" flung out here—aimed, as I understood it, at Democrats from the free States who advocate opinions such as I have to-day expressed. Something of the same kind, if I mistake not, has fallen from the lips of one or two members during the present session. When an abolitionist takes occasion to be smart in that way, I have no serious answer for him. I never

hold any grave discussion with any of them, because their discussions run too much into rant and declamation for an old-fashioned platform Democrat, such as I am. When a Whig aims to be racy by calling names—"dough-face"—I do not hurl it back in his face with unutterable scorn. No, sir! I have no unutterable scorn. I can always give expression to as much of that passion or sentiment (which is it?) as I feel. I simply hand it back to him, with the good-natured disregard of a man conscious of rectitude and of patriotic motives, and I say to him, Here, my friend, take this "dough-face." The "face" you may dispose of at your pleasure; but take good care of the "dough." It will make a most appropriate conscience and creed for the universal Whig party, as represented in its head men, politicians, and general olio material, composed of New England Federalism, Southern and Western Whigery, and seasoned with abolitionism in the Northern and Western quarters, to exactly suit the taste of "all inquiring friends."

And, sir, should any honorable member, calling himself a Democrat, have occasion to use that epithet as applicable to me, I hope he will give me notice, so that I may give him my attention. Then, if when he comes to the end of the sentence, or paragraph, in which he uses the epithet, he will, in conformity with the usual courtesy here, yield me the floor for exactly a minute and a half, I will, without offence, either give him an answer, or tell a true story which will stand for an answer.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents have been expecting me to make a war speech. But I have deferred doing so, lest I might retard the passage of bills providing for carrying on the war. After the treaty shall be ratified, or, that failing, after the necessary bills for carrying on the war shall have passed, I will, if I can obtain the floor, make a war speech, expressive of my views upon the war and all incidental topics. But, at present, I prefer voting to speaking; and nothing would have tempted me to speak now, but that I saw that about so much time would, in any event, be occupied by this discussion, and I thought I might as well occupy the floor as a better man. Besides, sir, I think that members from the Northern slave States and the Southern free States, where the people are not stark staring mad on this subject, but have all their sober senses about them, ought to take the floor whenever this subject comes up, and keep the peace between the anti-slavery sons of the Pilgrims and the Cavaliers, to each of whom this subject seems to be one on which they delight to "pile up the agony."

Occasionally I hear, in discussions and conversations, threats of a dissolution of the Union. These threats generally come from New England, or from the slave States on the Atlantic slope. From this, one might infer that some of the old thirteen States have been wedded so long, and experienced so many family jars, as to have become disposed to trifle with their marriage vow. In the Middle and Western States a very different feeling prevails. In the West, we consider the Union our ALL. New England and the Atlantic slave States are far apart; and we hope and believe that their mutual objurgations amount to no more than a scolding-match between two querulous parties separated by an impassable barrier. We are that barrier. We guess there will be no fight; but, if there be one, we are aware, that unless we of the Middle and Western States take decided and high ground, our territory will be the "debatable ground" of a national passage at arms, as it now is of the slavery agitation; and thus we shall be victimized in war as we are now in politics. We shall tamely submit to nothing of the sort. It amuses us to hear sons, who acknowledge that their



fathers were thieves, twit others with being the sons of receivers or accessories after the fact, and to hear these last run into a defence of that for which their most legitimate justification is, that they cannot help themselves. We do not believe that either mean half they say. But just show us that you are in earnest, and I give you notice, on behalf of those who are victimized by your unreasonable political squabbles, that when you dissolve the Union, you shall not survey a boundary line through or near our borders. We of the Middle and Western States will stick to both of you like leeches. You, who are so busy fomenting discontents on this subject, may secede from the Union in welcome, and you will not be much missed. But divide the Union you shall not! WE SWEAR IT! And if you talk about a fight, I give you notice that you cannot make the territory of the Middle States your battle-field. If you refuse us sureties for the peace, and go to loggerheads, you may catch a joint pummelling at our hands. We are the backbone of the Union, we would have you to know. A dissolution of the Union would ruin us; and we are resolved not to be ruined. The Southern free States, the Northern slave States, and the Mississippi valley, can jog along together comfortably. They cannot and will not do without the union of the States. The Middle States are waking up, and beginning to understand this slavery agitation. The Western States hear the Union threatened, and feel "wolfy." So look out Messrs. Pilgrim and Cavalier, or you will hear thunder.

I have a few words to say to these same cavaliers, and I will cease to speak. Your fathers were the receivers of stolen property. No decent man will reproach you with that. The ultra Calvinism which construes literally, and in a damning sense, the declaration that "the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge," cannot now be found, except in the study of some D. D., or in some other dark corner of the earth. In the studies of the ordinary parochial clergyman, or circuit preacher, it is not now generally to be found. Slaveholding is fixed upon you by circumstances much more stubborn than are your State laws. The Pilgrim fathers stole this property, and sold it to your fathers. Their sons, now-a-days—some of them—think to make atonement for the larceny of their fathers, by stealing back some of the increase of this same property. Such is their notion. Besides, having repented of all their own sins, relieved all the distress in their own vicinity, and acquired all possible moral knowledge, they missionate with a view to find sins to be repented of, distress to be relieved, and ignorance to be enlightened. They find you in possession of slaves, in the course of their charitable perambulations, and come to the conclusion that in this you are wrong. Located at a distance from you, they do not naturally come into a knowledge of the peculiar circumstances which make it impossible for you to relieve yourselves of this evil. Instead of making the matter a subject of friendly remonstrance to you personally, they hold meetings at a distance, and resolve and declaim against you, and send madmen or bigots to the national councils to agitate and denounce. If your slaves run off to them, they hide them. Sometimes emissaries come from among them, and steal your slaves. All this is very provoking. If loud complaining would cure the evil, I would say, shout your complaints. But it does no good. These circumstances are as stubborn as are the circumstances which fix slaveholding upon you. All the non-slaveholding States and people are not arrayed against you. Many even of those who, by their sermons, speeches, and conversations, encourage the larcenies of which you complain, do not mean to produce that effect. Those in the non-slaveholding States, who understand the matter, and

are prepared to sustain all your rights, have no special or personal interest in doing so, and are therefore rather sluggish in moving; while they who are against you, like all men more or less imbued with any "single idea," are active, energetic, and ubiquitous. These, also, are circumstances which no efforts of yours can modify. Your best reliance is upon the Constitution, and those who judicially administer it. It is not always an indication that the people of a Congressional district are unconstitutionally hostile to your interests, that their representative here promulgates unconstitutional dogmas. The advocates of the "one idea" are, as I have said, active, energetic, and ubiquitous. They are, moreover, Jesuitical, in the bad sense of the term. Fifty of them, who do not openly act with the abolitionists, will do wonders in a Congressional district. If their representative here does his duty to the Union, by speaking and voting against their opinions, they know how to attack him. Suppressing the true reason of their hostility, they will unitedly and simultaneously throw into circulation considerations, true or false, or partly both, calculated to produce general impressions against him. With much personal popularity, and general acquaintance with the people of his district, he may sustain himself for a time; but, in the end, he will probably fall, (not generally, however, to be succeeded by a man of "one idea,") and he, and he only, will know the dirty agency which has subverted him. A politician who thinks only of achieving an election; who undervalues his personal independence; and who either knows not of, or cares not for, the mischief his course will work to the Union, to his political party, and to the States, will generally condescend to give some sort of assurance to the professors of the "one idea," to secure their active services in producing his nomination and election. When he comes here, he must redeem it. The mass of his constituents, who disapprove of his votes or course, having many ideas, do not lay much stress on the matter. They may write to him, expressing their regret, and there will end their movement, generally but not always. On the other hand, the "one idea" puts into requisition all its powers to sustain its representative. From this account of the matter, you will perceive how it is that the number of the representatives of the "one idea," nominally belonging to other parties, fluctuates as it does. I have said that not more than thirty or forty of the Democrats (so called) of my district are of the "one idea" school. Many of them are known only to myself. Each one of them I know for my sworn enemy, politically. They have been, are, and will continue to be, active, energetic, and ubiquitous.

In this state of circumstances, the Democrats of the South will see the propriety of living "by faith," and not "by sight." Things are not always as they appear. In the Middle and Western Democratic States, public opinion is, in the main, sound on the subject I am speaking of. State legislation, offensive to the rights and feelings of the slaveholder, instead of being an index of public opinion, is generally the result of the activity, energy, and ubiquity of the men of "one idea," and of the apathy and inattention of others. At all events, I respectfully suggest to Southern men the propriety of not permitting the presentation of a few petitions, the offering of a resolution, or a speech of a man they call "fanatic," to throw them into fits.

Mr. Speaker, I doubt not it will be said that I have made a very imprudent speech. I answer, that when I took up my pen to write this speech, I took leave of prudence. It is "a rascally virtue," as ordinarily exercised and exerted. I have called to my aid a higher virtue. I have written and spoken under the inspiration of truth.